

## Leo's fortunes are on the rise

He's that guy from 'Titanic'. For a long time now, Leonardo DiCaprio has been known for his role as the ultimate romantic hero in the super duper hit flick. But, surprisingly, everything he did before and after 'Titanic' went against the grain of the image the movie managed to espouse.

Now with his performance in the just released 'The Departed', DiCaprio for certain will distance himself even more from that image. He is the kind of actor who did not need the fame.

He has always been critically acclaimed and when his career chart is examined, it proves that the pomp of 'Titanic', which to any other actor would have been a godsend, was actually an anomaly in his career.

Even before 'Titanic' made him a global phenomenon, people didn't realise that he had already acted as a drug addict, shoot 'em up cowboy, prostitute and bisexual poet, and had been deservedly nominated for his brilliant performance as a mental retard in 'What's Eating Gilbert Grape?'

He had even unflinchingly held his own ground against acting legends like Robert De Niro and Meryl Streep in 'Marvin's Room' when he was just a kid. DiCaprio has got some serious talent and it won't take long when people will stop thinking of him as just that guy from 'Titanic'.

Born on Nov 11 in Hollywood, DiCaprio got his name because he kicked his pregnant mother from the inside while she was observing a Da Vinci in the Uffizi. By the time he was five, he appeared on his favourite show 'Romper Room'.

His next break came when he starred in 'This Boy's Life' with no less a legend than the great Robert De Niro; he was still a teenager. Critics took notice and he soon followed this up with one of his finest performances and what to many is considered as the finest portrayal of a mentally retarded in 'What's Eating Gilbert Grape?'

He played a brother to another upcoming actor Johnny Depp in this 1993 movie directed by Lasse Hallstrom. In one pivotal scene, Depp's character, after faithfully taking care of DiCaprio's character finally loses it and DiCaprio reacts with ignorant joy and slowly transforms into utter dejection as the facts of the situation slowly sink in.

The 19-year-old was now learning to hone in on his skill.

It was at this juncture that DiCaprio made a crucial decision to opt for more challenging roles and stay away from popular roles like the one he turned down for 'Batman Forever'. In 1995, he starred in some of the darkest roles on screen like 'Basketball Diaries', in which he played a basketball player at a Catholic school who is a hardcore addict, thief and prostitute.

Then came 'Titanic' in 1997. He was soon the biggest movie star in the world and no one was more surprised or wary as DiCaprio himself. He was on magazine covers that he had not even given interviews for and Playgirl had a full frontal nude picture of him.

He was linked to a bevy of supermodels, including Brazilian Gisele Bundchen with whom he had a long lasting relationship. Another amusing affect of DiCaprio's fame was the arrest of 28 barbers in

Kabul by the Taliban for giving kids DiCaprio haircuts.

Fame wasn't all he had to contend with and trouble soon came courting. DiCaprio allegedly met the actress Elizabeth Berkley and ordered his friends to beat up her then boyfriend. The boyfriend Roger Wilson was left with serious injuries and sued DiCaprio, who was found innocent in 2004.

But it wasn't long before DiCaprio would get his act together and get back to some serious acting. In 2003, he teamed up with the legendary director Martin Scorsese for the 'Gangs of New York' playing Amsterdam Vallon. And this director-actor partnership re-emerged for the critically acclaimed 'The Aviator' in 2004.

DiCaprio earned an Oscar nomination for his role as Howard Hughes, who was a pilot, director, inventor but also descended a downward spiral mentally and suffered from obsessive-compulsive tendencies.

With the recently released 'The Departed' directed by Scorsese, DiCaprio gives another strong performance but just as exciting is the partnership being cemented with the director.

Scorsese was one half of the most celebrated director-actor partnership when he teamed up with Robert De Niro in classics like 'Taxi Driver', 'Raging Bull' and 'Goodfellas'. Critics are anticipating an equally fruitful partnership with DiCaprio even as he is on the rise.

DiCaprio has not been content to just be an actor. He is an environmental activist and even interviewed former US President Bill Clinton about the sad state of the earth. He has written for Time magazine and is a patron of the Diane Fossey Fund, which was set up in honour of the activist.

He has set up his own foundation and won the prestigious Martin Litton Environmental Warrior Award. In 2003, he guest-edited the National Geographic Kids magazine. In 2004, DiCaprio campaigned for the presidential candidate John Kerry making 20 speeches in 11 states.

DiCaprio may not even be at the mid point of his career but he already has an impressive repertoire. He is an actor not after fame and fearless in his choice of roles. For this and more, Leo will always be on the rise.

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